

Czech national holidays

January 1 New Year

This festive day celebrates the start of the New Year. It usually starts late, as people have been out celebrating late the night before. Many people prepare a big meal including pork for good luck and lentils for prosperity. Stay away from fish or poultry today. Those meals may force your luck to swim or fly away!

April 16, 17 Easter Sunday and Monday

Easter is a Christian holiday, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus. The date is different every year, as it falls on the first Sunday after the spring full moon, so the first full moon after March 21. The symbols of Easter are much the same as the symbols for spring: lamb and eggs, representing new life.

May 1 Workers day (Labour Day)

Worker's Day, or Labour Day, commemorates the efforts of labour unions to improve working conditions for all people. On May 1, 1886, labour unions organized a strike in Chicago to protest against miserable working conditions. At the time, most workers worked ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week. The strikers wanted an eight hour work day. The police attacked the strikers for no reason, killing two and wounding several others. This led to protests in many other places. Today, Labour Day is meant to honour all workers, by giving them a day off! Many people head for their cottages in the country for a relaxing break from their work.

May 8 Liberation Day

Liberation Day celebrates the end of World War II on May 8, 1945. On this day, the Germans agreed to an unconditional surrender and the country was liberated from Nazi occupation. It's a good time to remember the people who fought and died for our freedom.

July 5 St. Cyril & Methodius Day

On this day, we remember two priests who played an important role in our history. In 863, St. Cyril and St. Methodius brought Christianity to the Slavic people of central Europe. They also wrote down the standard Slavic language at the time, which was the forerunner of Czech, Slovak, Polish and Russian languages.

July 6 Jan Hus Day

July 6 commemorates Jan Hus, a Catholic priest and the rector of Charles University. He was burned at the stake as a heretic because of his efforts to stop corruption in the Catholic Church. Because of his beliefs, he became the conscience of the Czech people.

September 28 St. Wenceslas Day

This day is celebrated as Czech Statehood Day. It commemorates the anniversary of the death of Prince Wenceslas, son of Vratislav I, Duke of Bohemia. About 935 AD, the Prince was murdered by his brother. He soon became St. Wenceslas, patron saint of the Czech Nation. His fame has spread outside the country, due to his starring role in a popular Christmas carol, *Good King Wenceslas*.

October 28th Czechoslovak Independence Day

On this day in 1918, the independent Czechoslovak Republic was founded. After World War I, the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated and an independent country was established. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk became Czechoslovakia's first president.

November 17 Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day

The struggle for freedom and democracy is remembered each year on November 17. It honors the student demonstrations against the Nazis in 1939, as well as the protests against the Communists in 1989. In 1939, huge demonstrations took place here against Nazi occupation. The Nazis suppressed the protest, and a medical student, Jan Opletal, was shot and killed. On the day of his funeral, hundreds of people, mostly students, demonstrated again, and the Germans violently suppressed the protests. The tensions culminated on November 17 when the Gestapo and SS units attacked student hostels arresting more than 1200 students and taking them to concentration camps. Nine students were executed without trial, and Adolf Hitler ordered the closing of colleges. Later, the day was proclaimed Student's Day.

Fifty years later, many students protested another kind of oppression on November 17, 1989. These demonstrations marked the beginning of the "Velvet Revolution" and started the path towards democracy for the country.

December 24-26 Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holiday, celebrating the birth of Jesus. It traditionally spans three days, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and St. Stephen's Day. It's a time for family and friends to gather, eat good food and spend time together.

Maturita Card 7: Holiday customs *Nahl* Bridge

What is a public holiday?

A public holiday is... a special day when we observe a significant historical or religious event / when people have a paid day off work / when schools / shops are closed. Public holidays are also called bank holidays in the UK and Canada.

What national holidays do we celebrate in the Czech Republic?

The Czech national holidays include Liberation Day, celebrating the end of German occupation during WWII in 1945 (May 8) / The Day of Slavonic Apostles Cyril and Methodius who brought Christianity to Great Moravia (July 5) / Jan Hus Day (July 6) when we remember the Czech church reformer who was burnt at the stake for his beliefs / St. Wenceslas' Day (28 September) who is the patron saint of the Czech Republic / On October 28 we celebrate the establishment of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks, Czechoslovakia, in 1918 / November 17 commemorates the student demonstration against the Nazi regime in 1939 and a student protest march in 1989 that led to the fall of communism.

What are some of the public holidays in the US and UK?

The most popular holidays in the US are... Thanksgiving in November / Independence Day on July 4. In Britain there are bank holidays on New Year's Day (January 1) / Good Friday / the first Monday in May / the last Monday in May / the last Monday in August / Christmas Day (December 25) / Boxing Day (December 26).

What are some of the public holidays celebrated in countries other than the UK and US?

In Australia they celebrate Australia Day on January 26 and Anzac Day on April 25. Australia Day commemorates / celebrates the establishment / setting up of the first colony in Australia by the British. People mark the day by going to the beach / having a barbecue / watching fireworks. Anzac Day is a serious day, which commemorates / remembers the soldiers who have died / served in battles / wars. In Canada on July 1 they celebrate Canada Day with various / different events like... parades / carnivals. An important public holiday in New Zealand is Waitangi Day on February 6. It marks / celebrates the day the Treaty of Waitangi was signed / the moment the Maori people gained equal rights in the British Commonwealth.

Do you know any festivals / holidays in English-speaking countries?

In America and Britain they celebrate Halloween (October 31) / St. Patrick's Day (March 17), a festival important to the Irish / Valentine's Day (February 14), a holiday for love. Most English-speaking countries also celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day, but on different days of the year.

What is your favourite holiday and why?

I enjoy Easter because... the weather usually starts to get warmer / I like decorating eggs. My favourite holiday is

Christmas because... it is when my whole family gets together / I like to bake cookies. New Year's Eve is the best because... of all the parties that happen / it's like a new start. November 17 is a good day to remember the country's history.

Are traditions still kept or are they disappearing in your country?

I think traditions are disappearing here because... young people don't care about traditions anymore / there is too much commercialization of holidays / people are too busy to get together with friends and family to celebrate traditional customs. I think traditions are still kept, especially in the country because people have closer relationships there / our parents and grandparents spend time doing traditional things and pass them on to their grandchildren.

How do people celebrate Christmas? What customs do they keep?

In our country we celebrate Christmas on December 24, unlike many other countries. We always decorate the Christmas tree with glass or straw ornaments / Our traditional Christmas dinner is fried carp and potato salad / Many people fast all day before Christmas dinner.

How do we celebrate Easter in our country?

We don't celebrate Easter too much, but always have the Monday off / Boys like Easter, they go around and whip girls with willow sticks and get eggs in return / Easter isn't celebrated too much in our country anymore.

What special occasions are important to people in their lives? Which event has been the red-letter day for you / your family?

I think... a wedding / birthday / graduation / funeral / the birth of a baby / first communion / baptism / wedding anniversary / class reunion are important events in one's life. A red-letter day for me has been... my graduation from high school / my 18th birthday / when I could drive.

What do people do on their birthday? What are some special birthday customs?

Often / Usually children get a birthday cake and have a birthday party with their friends. At the party they get gifts and play games such as hide-and-seek. Adults may also have birthday parties. Instead of games they... go dancing / go out for dinner / celebrate in a pub.

What are some of the customs for weddings?

There are many customs depending on the couple. Some people have a religious ceremony in a church / others have a civil ceremony / get married in a registry office. The bride and groom have a witness each / the maid of honour for the bride / the best man for the groom. The bride can throw her wedding bouquet / flowers to be caught by unmarried women. In the Czech Republic many customs signify the union of newlyweds such as feeding each other during the reception / sweeping up a broken plate together.